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NEW BOOKS REVIEWED

WARFARE IN THE HUMAN BODY. By Morley Roberts. New York: E. P. Dutton and Company.

There is no reason why a technical book should not be interesting—this has been said again and again. It would be truer to say that nowadays every book that is profoundly interesting must be in some degree technical. There is nothing in the nature of things to prevent a novelist from writing a deeply suggestive work on biology. In fact, imagination—a faculty in which novelists are supposed to excel—is credited with most great advances in science, though it is not at a premium in the work of the present-day scientific specialist. To drop loose generalizations and come to the point: Mr. Morley Roberts, a novelist, has written a biological discourse that seems to promise new discoveries.

Whatever turn expert opinion may take in regard to this work, the lay reader, one believes, will generally welcome it with something akin to enthusiasm. If there be such a thing as the instinctive recognition of originality, as apart from irresponsible difference, one seems to find that precious quality here. Mr. Roberts's explanations really appear to explain, and they have in certain instances that paradoxical clearness which often seems to advise us that we are in the presence of a truth the simplicity of which has hitherto eluded us.

It is a point in Mr. Roberts's general conception of his subject that scientific research tends to an undue narrowness; the biologist, the physiologist, and the pathologist not only work in strictly separate fields, but tend to be somewhat hostile in their attitudes. Real advance, the author holds, is likely to be made when men in different lines of investigation are able to compare notes and to work on common hypotheses—and this seems merely reasonable. One remembers in this connection how Metchnikoff, a biologist interested in the study of the lowest forms of life, originated the theory of intracellular digestion, and one thinks of the opposition he encountered from the pathologists.

Mr. Roberts, however, in justification of his method goes much further than insistence on the value of comparing notes. As interesting as anything else in his book is his defense of *analogy* as a means of investigation. Science, he appears to suggest, is in some danger of becoming enslaved by its own laborious inductive system. Is it possible that Bacon's method is tending to develop into a new scholasticism? However this may be, it is certain that Mr. Roberts's reasoning gives one an unusual sense of freedom. "Universal laws," he pregnantly remarks, "are indeed universal." The inference is that if certain evolutionary principles hold good in the social organism, the results attained in this latter field may actually throw light upon some obscure questions of biology. Why depend wholly upon the microscope when a *macroscopic* view is obtainable? If analogy is a weak reliance, its evidence can scarcely be more doubtful than that of the microscope in extreme cases.

All this is rather exciting; it really seems that new paths may be opened up by the use of the freer method of analysis which the author advocates. It must indeed be admitted that in some cases the analogies actually seem, if not far-fetched, at least to some extent dragged in; they do not invariably appear to be integral parts of the process of discovery—yet they are in every case suggestive.

However arrived at—and they could not have been reached except by a mind unattached either to a system or to a school—many of the conclusions are striking and seem likely to prove fertile. Especially remarkable is the whole chapter on "Repair in Evolution". At first blush, nothing would seem more improbable than that the conditions we call abnormal are the very causes of evolutionary progress, yet the proofs are very striking; and as one reads, one becomes more and more convinced that Mr. Roberts, with his singular independence of thought, is at least weaning us from a rather stupid prepossession. The *mere* "survival of the fittest" is an obviously insufficient explanation, and as one considers the matter one becomes increasingly aware of the nicety with which the function of repair fits into the whole scheme of things as *vera causa.* At last one is fully prepared to accept the strange statement that "physiology in the sense of perfected action is an ideal of living structure, and no sooner seen than lost, while a morbid or semi-morbid condition due to over-stress and the reactions of repair, is the true norm of evolution."

Underlying this idea and all else in the book is the conception of life as the result of a "hostile symbiosis". The component parts of an organism—the tissues of a living body, and men in society—do indeed peacefully coöperate, yet there is in all cases a suppressed mutual hostility. This hostility is not merely a destructive force (though it is potentially disruptive) but acts normally in its various forms as the necessary stimuli of the conjoint individual. This conception is used in a somewhat surprising manner to explain the phenomena of malignancy and those of immunity. Even nutrition, the author points out, is but a case of immunity.

On the whole, this book tends in a fascinating way to enlarge one's view of the universe. One is inclined to endorse the opinion of Professor B. J. Collingwood, who says that the work contains "some suggestions that are closely allied to genius".

THE NEW IDEALISM. By May Sinclair. New York: The MacMillan Company.

Unlike science, philosophy appears to be justified not by its immediate results, but rather by the fact that minds of a certain kind and degree of